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# PHSB STUDIES

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## RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MARITAL STATUS AND MORTALITY IN NORTH CAROLINA

As cancer mortality continues to spiral in the United States, research into the epidemiology and etiology of the disease becomes increasingly more fervent and widespread. Thus, a number of studies have come to identify some important correlates of various forms of cancer, among these, the demographic correlates of age, race, sex, geography and marital status (1).

In North Carolina, previous studies and reports (2,3) have examined cause-specific mortality by age, race, sex and geographical distribution, but no attempt has been made to examine mortality in terms of marital status. The present study does this, not only for major cancer sites but for other leading causes of death as well. A search of recent literature (4) failed to reveal current research in this area, except with respect to cancer.

In the sections to follow, age-adjusted and age-specific death rates and a statistical test known as the chi-square criterion are used to describe the State's mortality experience for the period 1973-1975, specific for population subgroups 15 and older. A preceding publication (3) describes the cause of death categories in terms of codes from the International Classification of Diseases, Adapted; other definitions used in these analyses are given on pages 6 and 7.

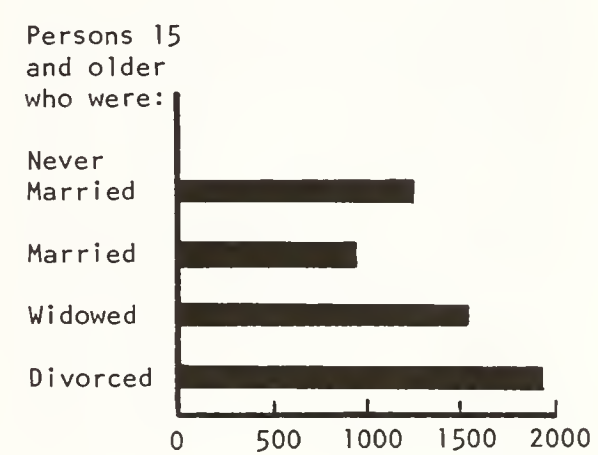
### Age-adjusted Death Rates

The age-adjusted rates of Table 1 show that, for all race-sex groups, married North Carolinians aged 15 and older experienced lower mortality than never married, widowed and divorced persons. Divorced persons experienced the highest mortality except for nonwhite females among whom divorcées experienced lower mortality than never marrieds and widows.

As a whole, relationships between marital status and mortality were generally not as strong for nonwhite females as for the other race-sex groups; Table 1 also shows very small mortality differentials between married and never married white males and between widowed and divorced white males, particularly with respect to the cardiovascular diseases.

On a cause-specific basis, patterns in marital mortality varied; however, as indicated by the chi-square results summarized in Table 2, all race-sex groups

ADJUSTED DEATH RATES, 1973-1975



Deaths per 100,000 Population  
(adjusted for age, race and sex)